



September 26, 2023

TO: Clerk Sleeper, Michigan House of Representatives

FROM: Marcus Cheatham on behalf of Healthy Democracy Healthy People

DATE: September 26, 2023

RE: Testimony in support of HB 4983

I am a retired Michigan local public health officer and I wish to speak in support of HB 4983 Automatic Voter Registration. I currently volunteer for Healthy Democracy Healthy People (HDHP), an initiative of our country's major public health organizations including the American Public Health Association (APHA), the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) among many others.

Public health is concerned with strengthening the factors that promote health in Michigan and American communities. One thing that public health has understood for a long time is that communities with stronger democratic institutions, especially higher levels of voter participation, are healthier than communities that lack them.

Building on the work of many other scholars, HDHP has published the findings of its research in this area in the Health and Democracy Index ([democracyindex.hdhp.us](https://democracyindex.hdhp.us)). The index shows that states that make participation in elections more accessible through policies like automatic and same day registration, reasonable voter ID requirements, re-enfranchisement of felons and options to vote by mail enjoy better public health outcomes like longer lives and lower mortality rates.

I am personally concerned about automatic voter registration (AVR) because of what I saw as a health officer in rural Michigan. The people we served clearly understood the things that could make them and their families healthier. But low-



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income, vulnerable people often could not participate fully in the political process because of time, transportation and other barriers. As a result, our public policies often failed to meet their needs.

Obviously AVR is only one part of a comprehensive set of reforms that are required. For example, AVR will not work well for Medicaid eligible people unless we provide adequate opportunities for redetermination of their status if they fall off the rolls. Please consider AVR within the context of all the things impacting the lives of Michiganders.

Thank-you for considering this testimony.